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Base invites residents to join cleanup board

Willow Grove NAS has four hazardous waste sites

By John Corcoran
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HORSHAM — Residents who have concerns or just want to be kept informed about environmental cleanup efforts at the Willow Grove Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base can meet with base authorities Thursday morning.

Community members are invited to join a Restoration Advisory Board that will participate with officials from the base, the Department of Defense and the Environmental Protection Agency in making decisions to clean up hazardous waste sites, said Jim Edmond, a spokesman for the base.

Four hazardous sites that need remediation have been identified on the 838 acres of the base operated by the Navy, said Russ Turner, project manager for Brown and Root Environmental of Wayne, a consulting firm hired by the Navy.

Three of those sites appear to have been old landfills where test bores and monitoring wells have found solvents, pesticides and fuels that were probably dumped there

decades ago, Turner said.

The fourth site contains polychlorinated biphenyl, a group of carcinogens commonly referred to as PCBs, believed to be from a leaking transformer that had been worked on there, he said.

A fifth site, the runway parking apron, was identified recently, Turner said.

Fuel was apparently spilled there over the course of decades, but there is no documentation as to how much or when and it needs to be investigated further, he said.

Col. Richard Moss, commander of the 913th Airlift Wing, said the 162 acres that the Air Force occupies at the base has one area that needs remediation.

A storage tank leaked 7,500 to 8,000 gallons of fuel that leached into an adjacent farm field, he said.

The Air Force has been using a vapor extraction method to pump the fumes out and burn them in an incinerator since 1994 and bio-remediation in which naturally occurring bacteria feed off the petroleum products, Moss said.

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That has already cut the ground water plume of contamination from 1,000 feet to 500 feet, he said.

There may also be an area on the Air Force side of the base where contamination is leaching over from an old Navy landfill, but that needs to be investigated further, Moss said.

The environmental staffs from both the Air Force and Navy sides of the base will be working with the Restoration Advisory Board to

work out solutions to the problems, he said.

Thursday's meeting will be introductory, dealing mostly with background and what members of the advisory board will be asked to do, Turner said.

Meetings that get into the technical information will be held about once a quarter, he said.

The meeting will be from 9 to 11 a.m. in the Commanders Conference Room, Building 203 at the base.